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NEW COLLEGE OF THE HUMANITIES (NCH)  
EVALUATION OF SUMMER SCHOOL 20/21:  
CULTURE, CRISIS AND THE CITY  
FINAL REPORT

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2021, The New College of the Humanities (NCH) conducted three week-long Summer Schools for students who had just finished their penultimate year of secondary education:

- *Culture, Crisis and the City*
- *Law*
- *Sustainability, Technology and the Future*

This report presents findings from the evaluation, through a pre- and post-programme student survey, of the *Culture, Crisis and the City* summer school.

41 students completed the pre-programme survey, with 32 responses to the post-programme survey.

In this report, we first present findings from the pre-programme survey, including demographic characteristics of respondents, pre-existing knowledge of NCH and aspirations for the future.

We then present findings from the post-programme survey, drawing parallels with pre-programme survey questions where comparable. This section also contains key findings from a thematic analysis of a variety of open-ended questions.

We conclude this report with a brief summary of findings and, where appropriate, recommendations for future practice.

## FINDINGS FROM THE PRE-PROGRAMME SURVEY

NCH received 41 responses to the pre-programme survey for the *Culture, Crisis and the City* Summer School.

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

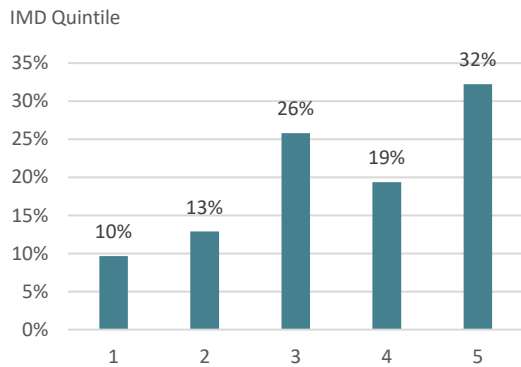


Figure 1 Participant IMD Quintiles

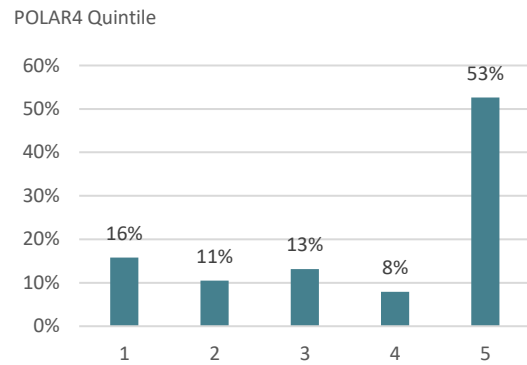


Figure 2 Participant POLAR4 Quintiles

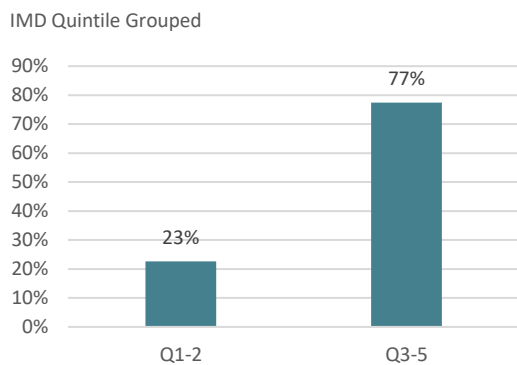


Figure 3 Participant IMD Quintiles Grouped

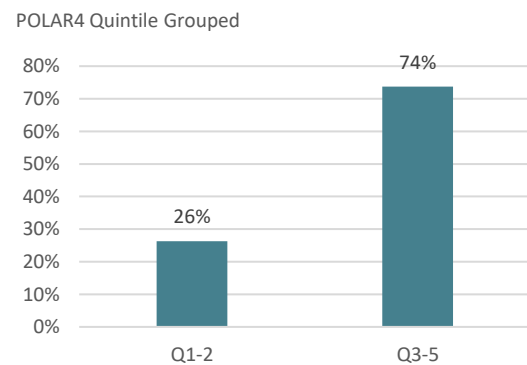
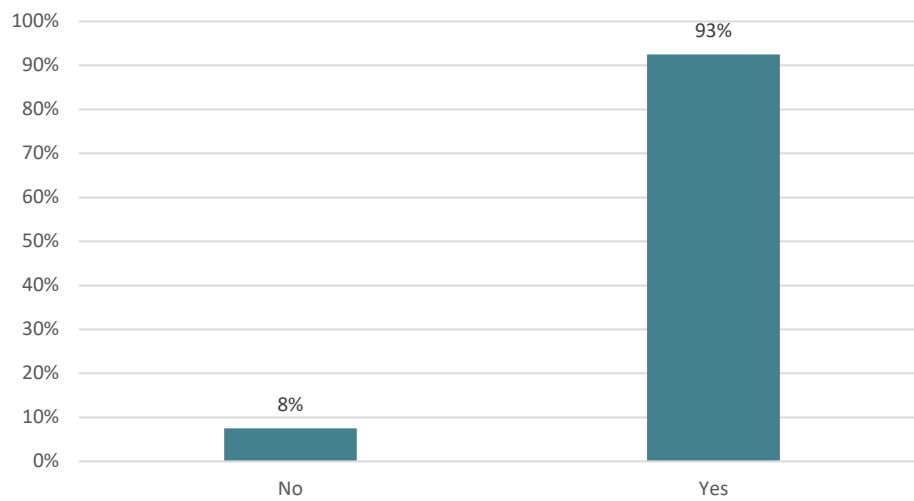


Figure 4 Participant POLAR4 Quintiles Grouped

Figures 1-4 show the proportion of respondents represented from IMD and POLAR4 quintiles. When grouped (figures 3 and 4), we see the majority of respondents came from Q3-5 for both IMD and POLAR4.

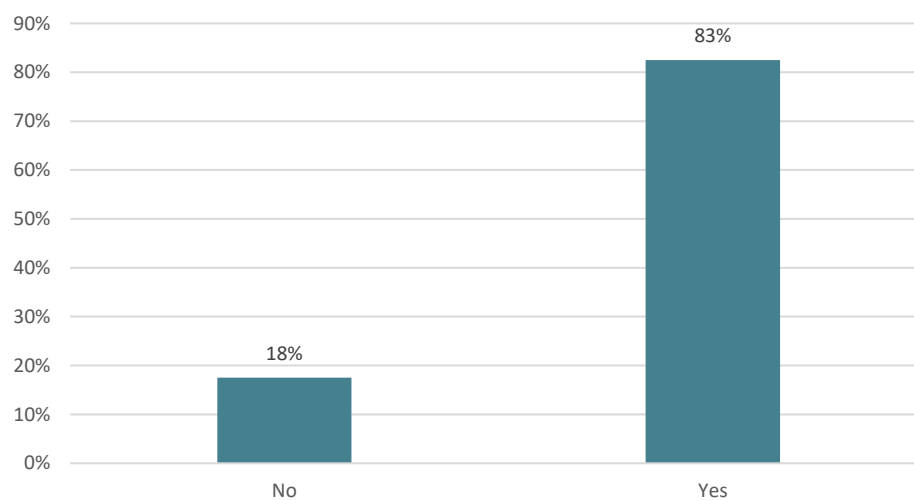
Have you, or are studying English at A-level or GCSE level?



**Figure 5** Have you, or are studying English at A-level or GCSE level?

Most respondents have studied or are studying English at A-level or GCSE level. English is a compulsory subject at GCSE, so this is not surprising.

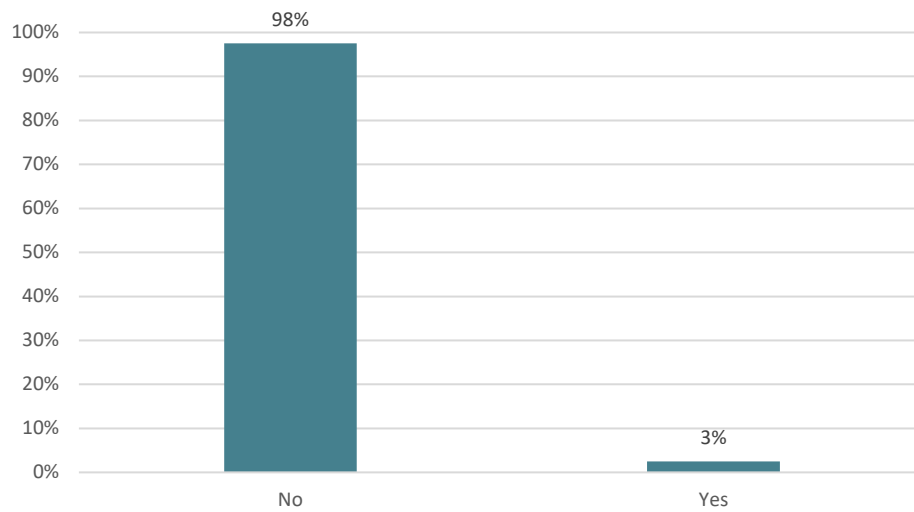
Have you, or are studying History at A-level or GCSE level?



**Figure 6** Have you, or are studying History at A-level or GCSE level?

Most respondents have studied or are studying History at A-level or GCSE level.

Have you, or are studying Art History at A-level or GCSE level?



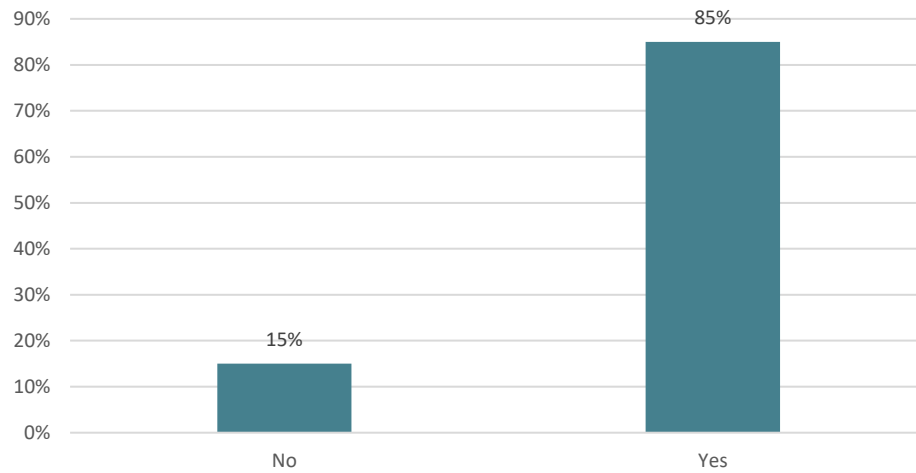
**Figure 7** Have you, or are studying Art History at A-level or GCSE level?

Few students (3%) have studied or are studying Art History at A-level or GCSE level. This is not surprising, as the subject is not widely available across the sector.

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## PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF NCH

Before applying to the participate in the summer school, have you heard about New College of the Humanities before?



**Figure 8** Before applying to the participate in the summer school, have you heard about New College of the Humanities before?

85% of respondents had heard of NCH prior to participating in the summer school.

IF YES TO Q6 In ways had you heard, or had experience with NCH before?

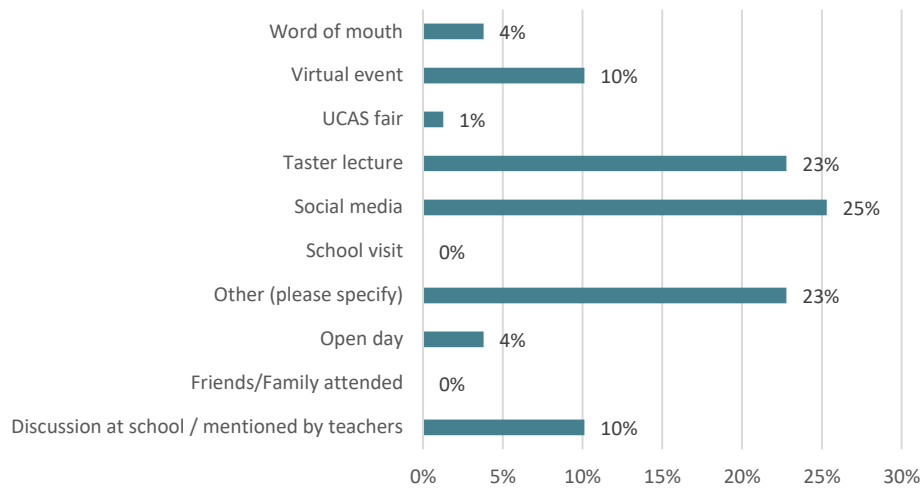


Figure 9 IF YES TO Q6 In ways had you heard, or had experience with NCH before?

Respondents had heard of NCH through a variety of means including taster lectures, social media, and discussions at school. Those who selected “Other” all specified through the essay competition, with the exception of one, who specified the law mentorship programme.

What grades do you think you need to study at NCH?

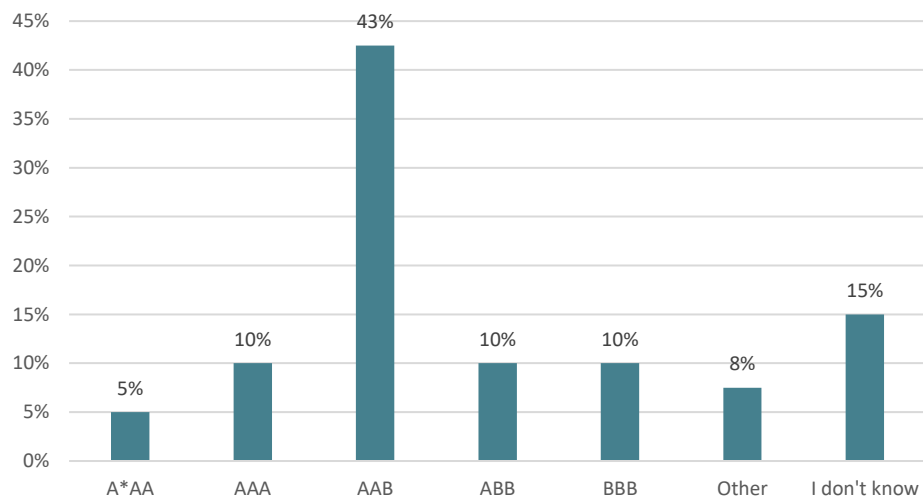
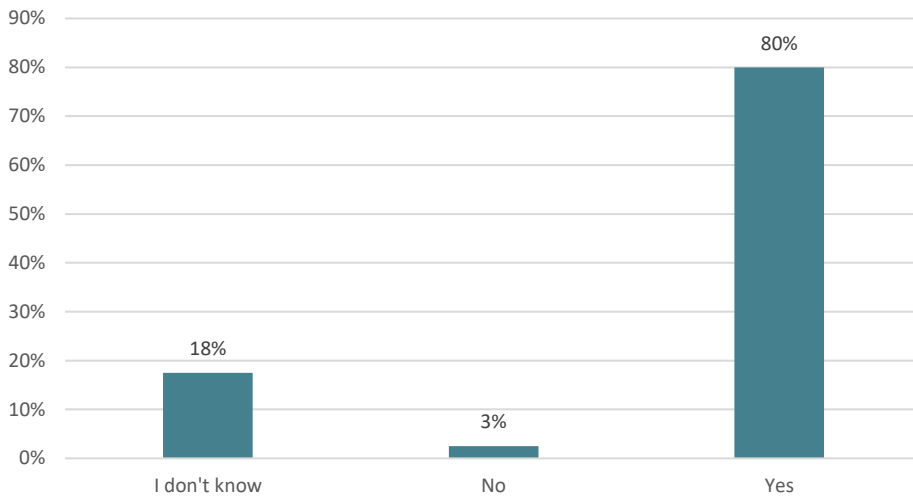


Figure 10 What grades do you think you need to study at NCH?

43% of respondents felt you needed AAB to study at NCH. Those who selected “Other” specified “35 points IB”, “Above average”, and “B or A”.

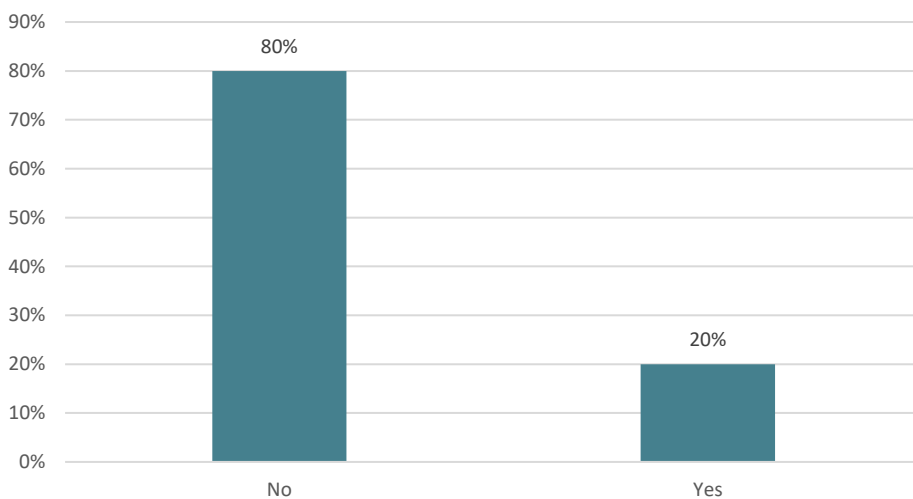
At NCH, is it possible to study a combined humanities degree?



**Figure 11** At NCH, is it possible to study a combined humanities degree?

80% of respondents said it was possible to study a combined humanities degree at NCH.

Have you heard of the NCH LAUNCH Programme?

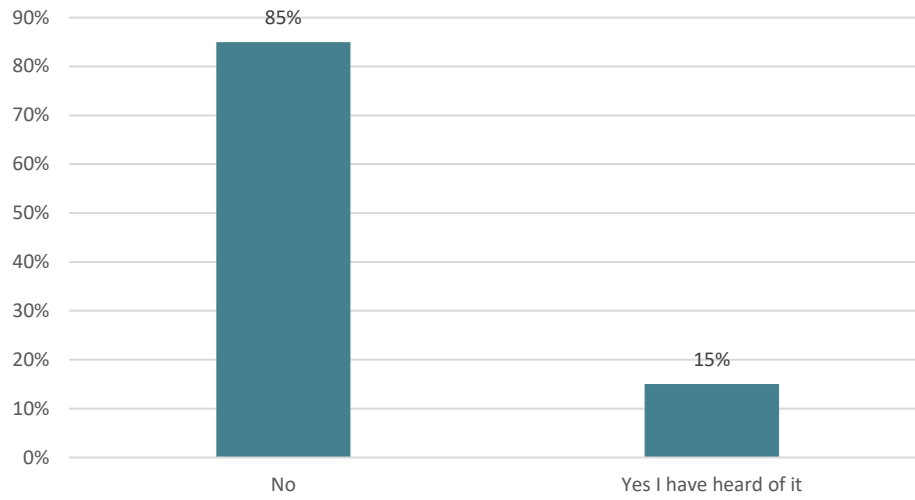


**Figure 12** Have you heard of the NCH LAUNCH Programme?

80% of respondents had not heard of the NCH LAUNCH programme.



Have you heard of, or used CANVAS before?

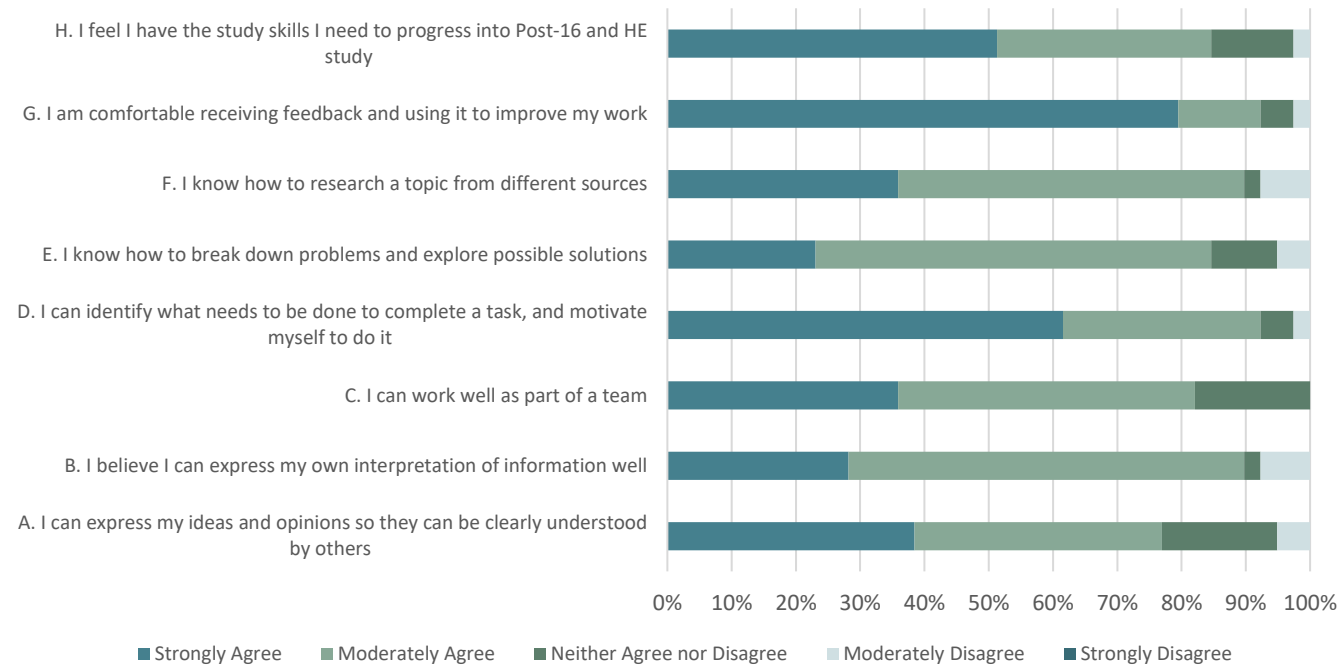


**Figure 13** Have you heard of, or used CANVAS before?

85% of respondents had not heard of CANVAS before.

## STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT AND FUTURE PLANS

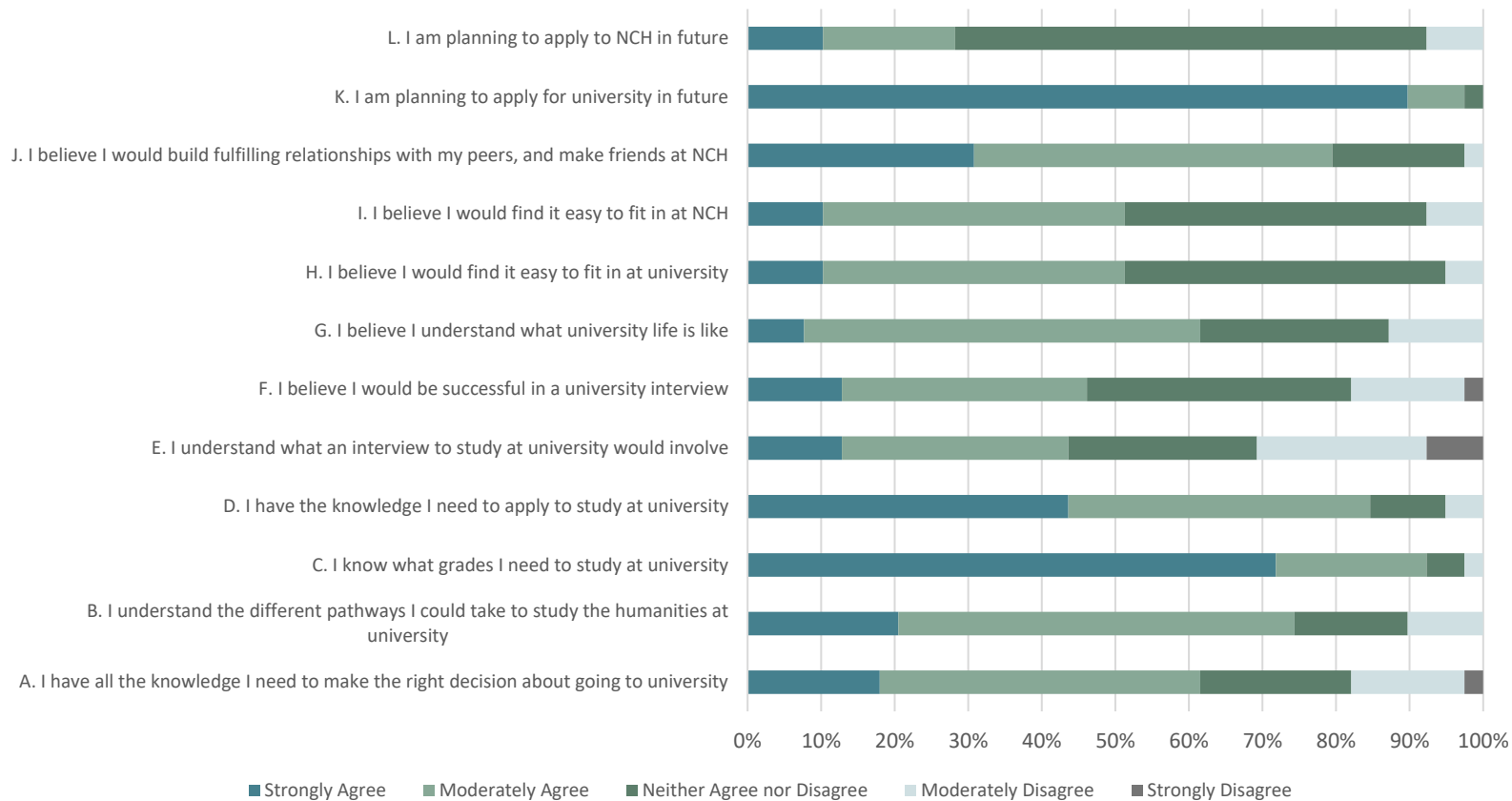
Thinking about how you feel about your current skills and knowledge to what extent do you agree with the following statements:



As shown in figure 14, respondents mostly agreed strongly or moderately with the statements above. Nearly 80% agreed strongly that they were comfortable receiving feedback and using it to improve their work. Respondents also felt reasonably confident that they had the study skills needed to progress into Post-16 and HE study, that they could express their own interpretation of information well, and that they can identify what needs to be done to complete a task and motivate themselves to do it.

Figure 14 Thinking about how you feel about your current skills and knowledge to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

Thinking about how you feel about continuing your studies after school / college; to what extent do you agree with the following statements:



**Figure 15** Thinking about how you feel about continuing your studies after school / college; to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

Responses shown in figure 15 are more mixed than in figure 14. The vast majority of students agreed strongly or moderately that they were planning on applying to university in the future, that they had the knowledge they needed to apply to university and that they knew the grades they needed to study at university. Respondents were less certain about applying to NCH, with most remaining ambivalent. There was some ambivalence also about fitting into NCH and fitting into university generally. There was also some uncertainty about what an interview to study at university would involve, and some doubt that they would be successful in a university interview.

**Date: November 2021**

**Author: SEER Research Team led by Dr Frances Johnson**

## EQUALITY, ACCESS AND DIVERSITY DATA

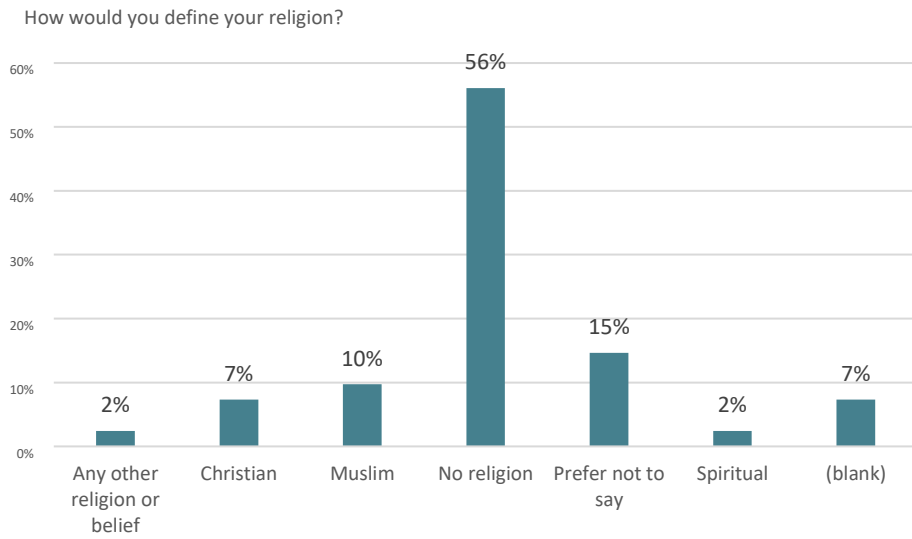


Figure 16 How would you define your religion?

Most students specified that they had no religion, with 15% preferring not to say, 10% identifying as Muslim and 7% as Christian.

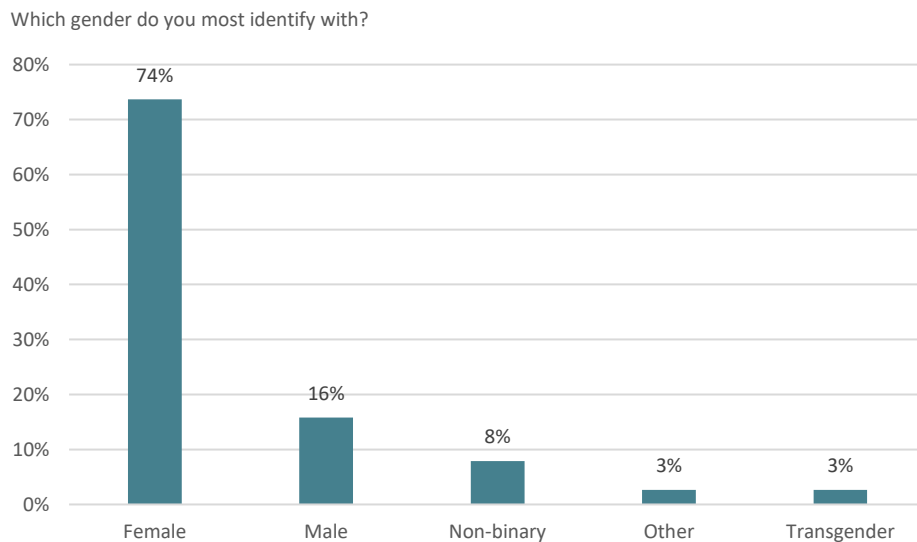
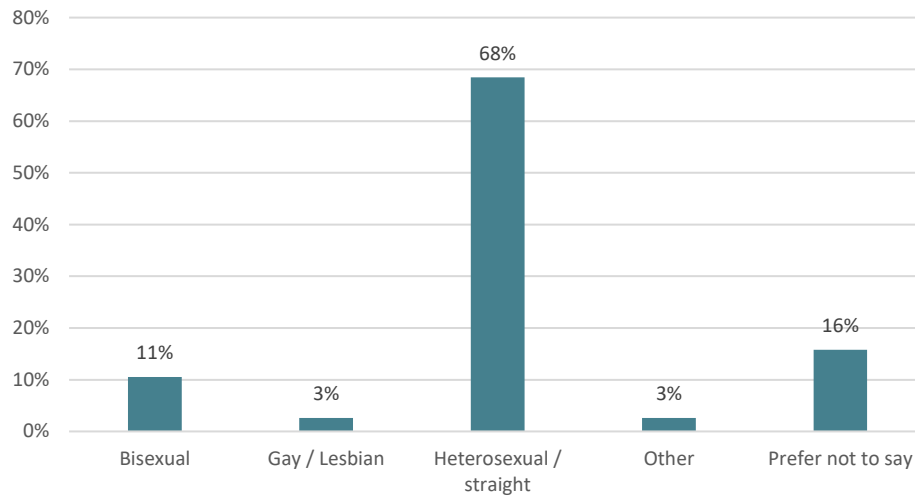


Figure 17 Which gender do you most identify with?

This cohort was overwhelmingly female (74%), with 16% male, 8% non-binary and 3% transgender. Those who selected “Other” did not specify further.

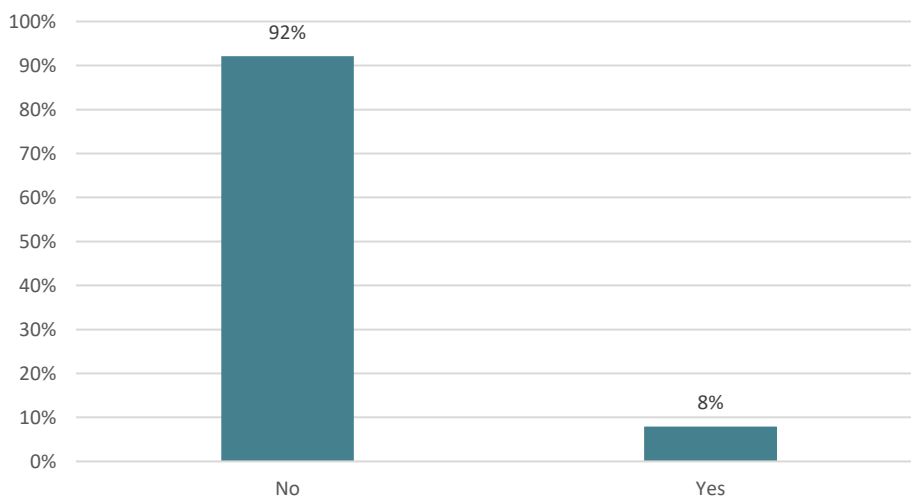
What is your sexual orientation?



**Figure 18** What is your sexual orientation?

68% of respondents identified as heterosexual/straight, 11% as bisexual, 3% as gay/lesbian and 16% preferred not to say. Those who selected “Other” did not specify further.

Do you consider yourself to be disabled\* under the Equality Act 2010?



**Figure 19** Do you consider yourself to be disabled\* under the Equality Act 2010?

What ethnic group do you most identify with?

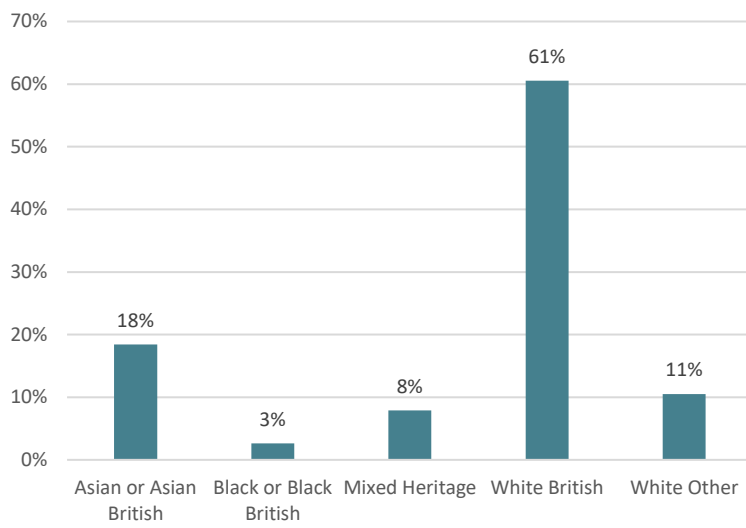


Figure 20 What ethnic group do you most identify with

What ethnic group do you most identify with?

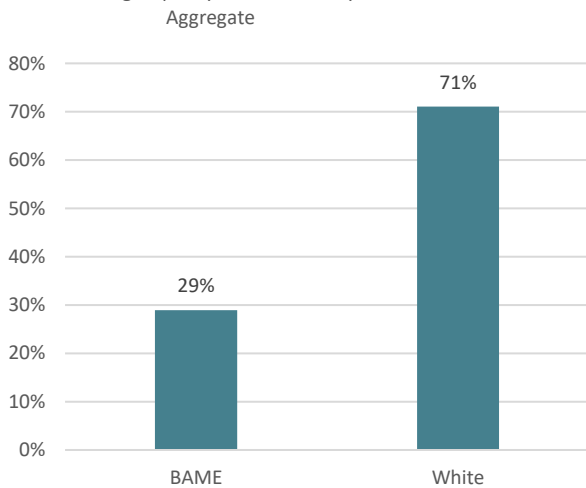
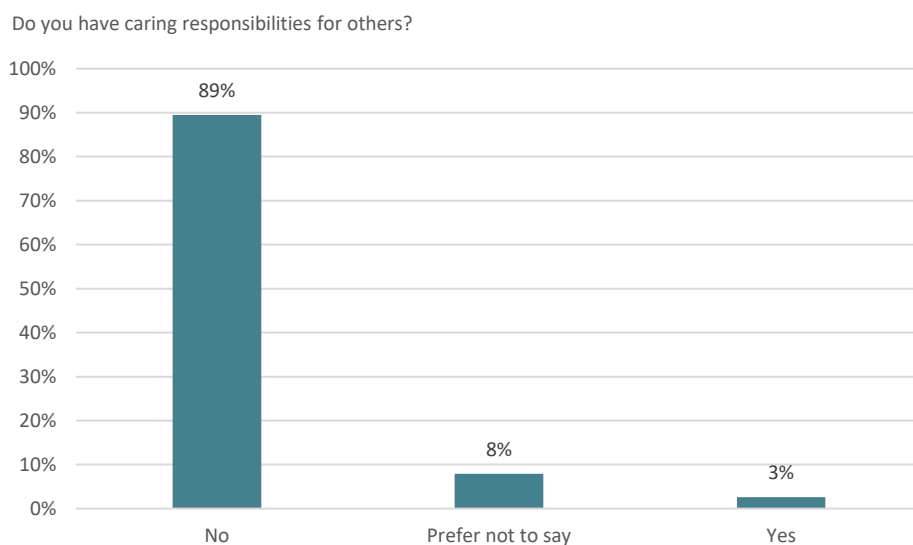


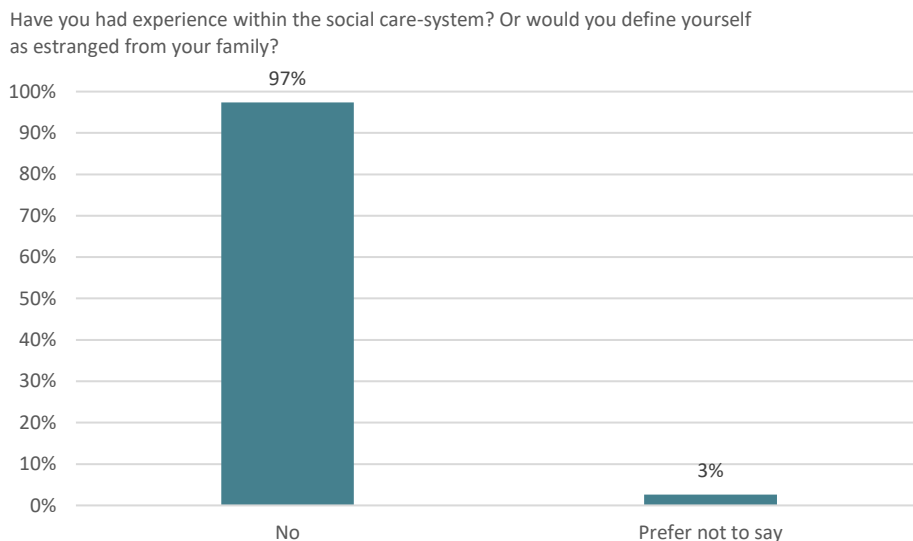
Figure 21 What ethnic group do you most identify with- Aggregate?

71% of respondents identified as white, with 29% identifying as Black and minority ethnic.



**Figure 22 Do you have caring responsibilities for others?**

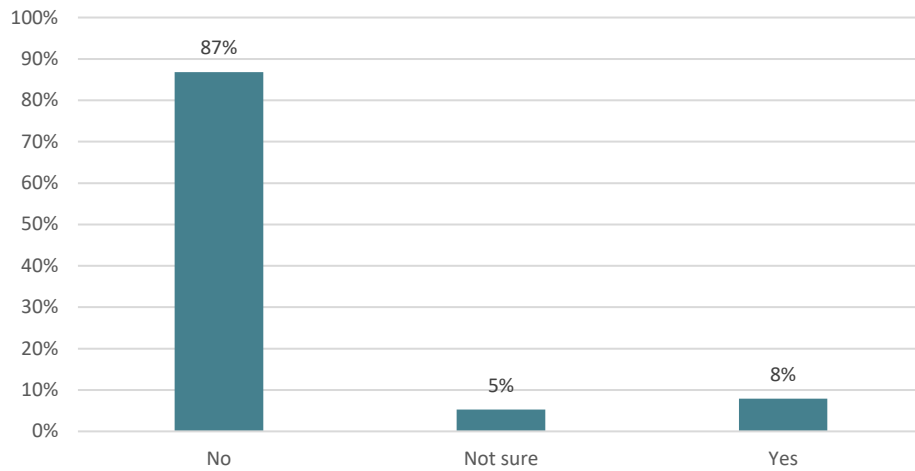
89% of respondents said they did not have caring responsibilities for others, 8% preferred not to say, and 3% said they did have caring responsibilities.



**Figure 23 Have you had experience within the social care-system? Or would you define yourself as estranged from your family?**

97% of respondents indicated they did not have any experience within the social care system, nor would they define themselves as estranged from their family. 3% preferred not to say.

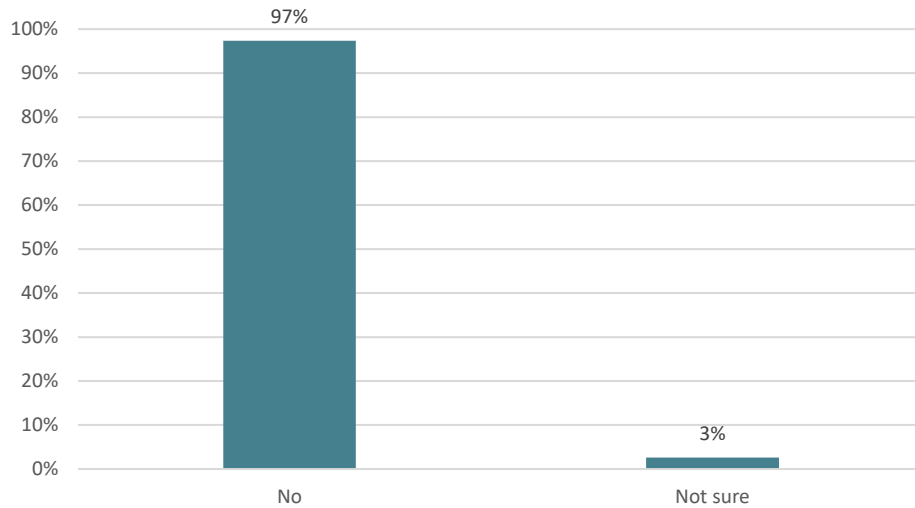
Have you, or your family been eligible to receive free school meals within the last 5 years?



**Figure 24** Have you, or your family been eligible to receive free school meals within the last 5 years?

Most respondents (87%) had not been eligible to receive free school meals within the last 5 years, 8% were eligible and 5% were not sure.

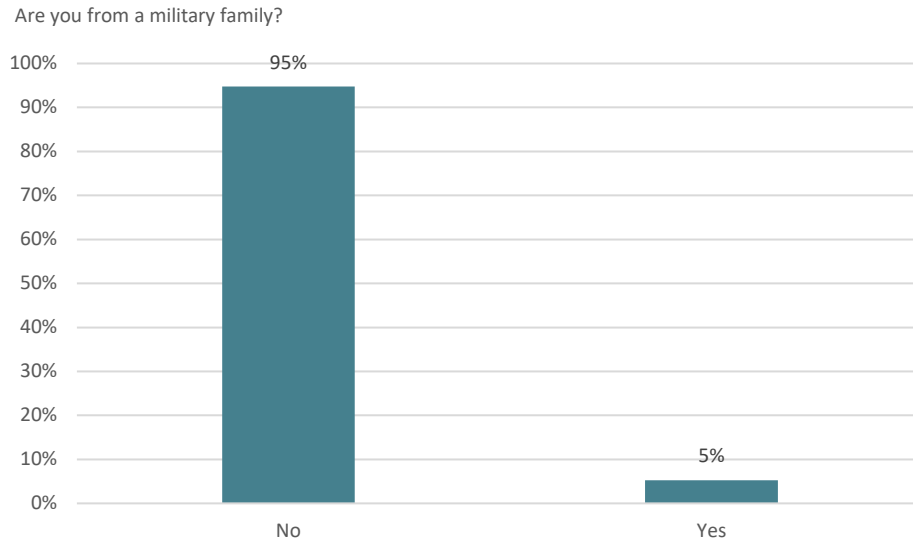
Do you currently have Refugee Status?



**Figure 25** Do you currently have Refugee Status?

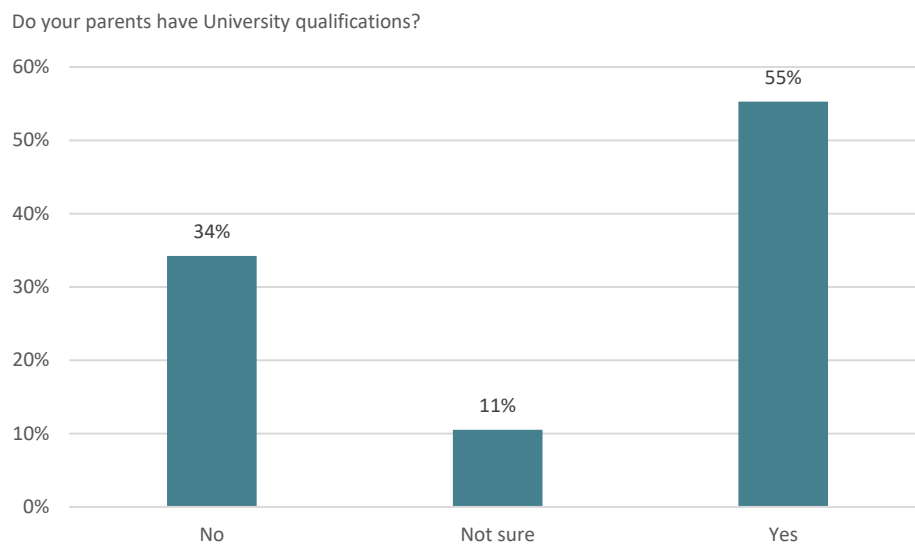
97% of students did not currently have refugee status. 3% were not sure.





**Figure 26** Are you from a military family?

5% of respondents were from a military family.



**Figure 27** Do your parents have University qualifications?

55% of respondents had parents who held university qualifications, 11% were not sure and 34% indicated that their parents did not have university qualifications.

## FINDINGS FROM THE POST-PROGRAMME SURVEY

We received 32 responses for the post-programme survey. Figure 43 shows participants feedback on the design and delivery of the programme itself. For the most part, students agreed or strongly agreed with all statements, with a minority (1 individual) disagreeing strongly. The most positive responses concern the friendliness and approachability of the staff, learning new things at NCH, and finding the programme interesting.

Thinking about your experience on the Summer School; to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

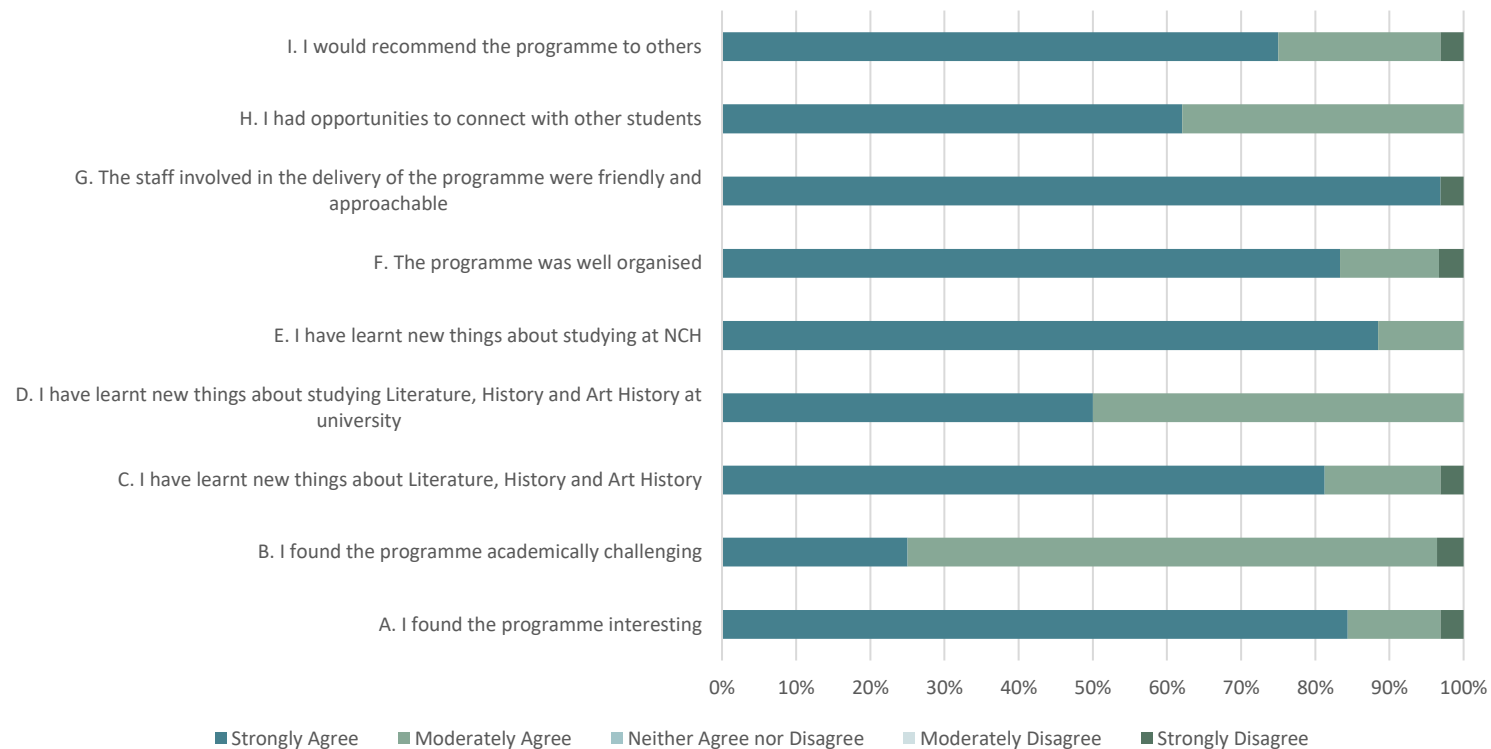


Figure 28 Thinking about your experience on the Summer School; to what extent do you agree with the following statements

Date: November 2021

Author: SEER Research Team led by Dr Frances Johnson

Thinking about how you feel about continuing your studies after school/college, after your participation in the Summer School to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

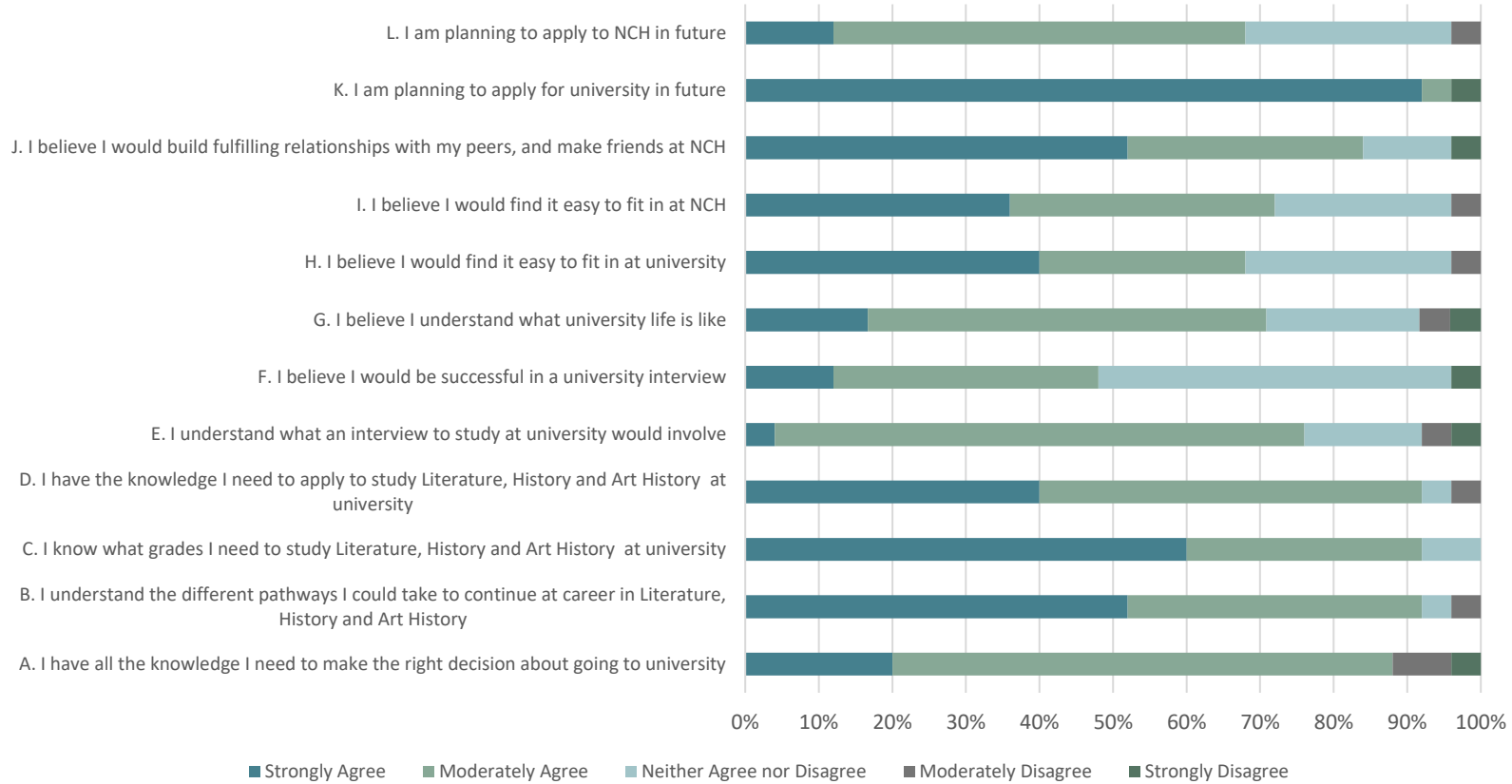


Figure 29 Thinking about how you feel about continuing your studies after school/college, after your participation in the Summer School to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

Figure 44 asks students to indicate their aspirations for and feelings about continuing their studies after school/college. This is the same set of statements as asked to students in the pre-programme survey (see figure 15), which has been reproduced below for ease of comparison.

Thinking about how you feel about continuing your studies after school / college; to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

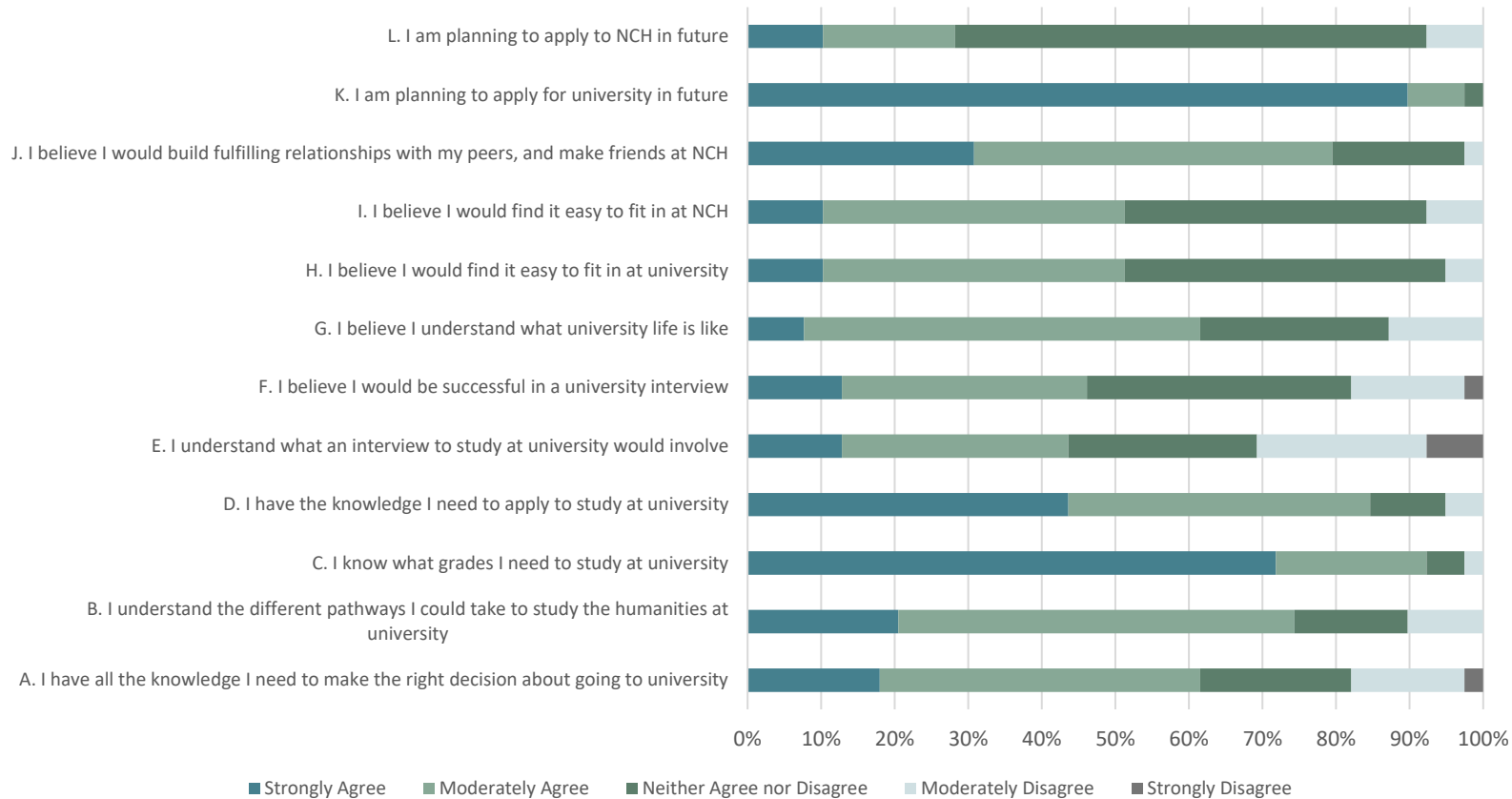


Figure 15 (reproduced from pre-programme survey)

Comparisons between figure 15 (pre-programme survey) and figure 44 (post-programme survey) show some differences and a move towards more positive responses. In the post-programme survey (figure 44), a higher proportion of students (relative to the pre-programme survey, figure 15) agreed moderately that they were planning to apply to NCH in the future. There was also a slight increase in proportion of students strongly agreeing that they were planning to apply to university in the future and

students were more likely to strongly agree that they would fit in easily at NCH and fit in easily in university generally. A significant proportion of students remained ambivalent about their success in a university interview, although findings show improvements in this area. Understanding of different pathways available at HE and student knowledge required to make decisions have both increased.

It is important to note, however, that we received fewer responses to the post-programme survey compared with the pre-programme (41 vs. 32), which may have influenced outcomes.

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## RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

### **Q: What was your favourite part of the summer school?**

In response to the question above, a number of students responded that they ‘thoroughly enjoyed learning about the plague’. Students said that it was a topic they had not studied before and they particularly ‘loved looking at extracts from Defoe’s “Journey of a Plague Year”’. Students enjoyed studying *The Drowned World* as they were given the opportunity to prepare in advance. Some students found that their favourite part of the summer school was the ‘break out rooms’ as students ‘were able to share our ideas with our peers’. Students ‘enjoyed the interactive aspect of the summer school’ and the ability ‘to talk in smaller groups and work on projects together’.

### **Q: What do you think could have been improved in the summer school?**

In response to the question above, a number of students responded that they felt that there were no improvements that could be made, they ‘thought everything was perfect’. However, others felt that the sessions could be made shorter to maintain concentration, for example they could ‘split up the 2 hours a day into 1-hour slots.’ Students would also have liked to have spent ‘more time on research projects.’ Students shared that they would have liked to have ‘some way of talking/interacting with our peers outside of the seminar sessions’. Others suggested that ‘a quick tutorial on how to use Zoom’ and ‘email reminders an hour before each Zoom session’ would be helpful.

### **Q: What will be your biggest ‘take-away’ piece of information/learning from your time at the Summer School?**

In response to the question above, a number of students said that their biggest ‘take-away’ was the connection between history, art and literature and that the ‘skills needed to study’ are ‘widely transferable’. Some students said their biggest ‘take-away’ was ‘to pay more attention to my surroundings’, whilst others found ‘how important it is to compare both literature and history to get a fuller, more truthful picture of an event’. Students shared that they had also gained confidence in their ideas and sharing their ideas.

### **Q: Briefly describe how fog was represented by one nineteenth- or twentieth-century artist.**

In response to the above, students responded that Markino ‘took an approach which made the fog elegant and peaceful’. Students also said that:

*‘the soft and delicate nature of his watercolour paintings provides a sense of harmony between his subjects and the fog/ background of the picture.’*

Students commented that:

*'we see a development of the perceptions of London fog across the 19th-20th century and the romanticised depiction by Markino suggests that the people of London had finally accepted the London fog as part of their identity.'*

And:

*'Yoshio Markino viewed and portrayed it as something beautiful that deserved highlighting just as much as the people of London. It added to the atmosphere rather than created hostility.'*

In comparison, students said that William Small presented fog as 'full of hidden chaos' and 'hostile, suffocating and disorientating'. Students said that Monet 'shows the beauty that could be seen in the fog' and presented 'the smog as a beautiful and illusive sky'. Meanwhile:

*'Whistler depicted the fog as a powerful and overwhelming component of London's environment and used colour to depict this'*

And

*'artists such as Turner in the 19th century painted fog in a very romanticised and sublime way, with elements of both beauty and danger.'*

### **Who was Daniel Defoe?**

All students correctly identified Daniel Defoe as a writer.

### **What happened during the Gordon Riots?**

In response to the question above, students responded that:

*'The Gordon Riots of 1780 were a series of anti-Catholic riots in London that lasted several days.'*

They said that the riots:

*'came as a result as the Catholic Relief Act which led many protestants, under Lord George Gordon, to protest.'*

Students noted that the riots 'escalated' and:

*'as the riots progressed, they became more destructive, successfully attacking a number of houses, churches, and notably the burning down of a number of prisons, such as Newgate Prison, where a number of the rioters were being held.'*

Another respondent noted:

*'the most violent day occurring on Wednesday the 7th June 1780'. Students said that '40,000-60,000 gathered at George's Field' and 'on the 7th June, the army was finally called upon to suppress the riots, with many of the rioters killed and imprisoned.'*

### **What is London like in J. G. Ballard's The Drowned World?**

Responses to the question above included '[London was] very hot', abandoned' and 'flooded'. Others noted that London was 'overtaken by nature' and 'there are abnormally large animals roaming around'. One student described London as 'an exotic landscape' and 'almost completely inhabitable due to climate change.' Another mentioned that 'notable places such as the Ritz have been submerged in water' and:

*'it is so destroyed that it is hardly distinguishable from other cities like Paris or Berlin.'*

One student responded that:

*'London is portrayed as a ghost town and an empty shell of what London used to be.'*

Others compared London to 'an overgrown jungle', 'swamp land' and 'one great abandoned lagoon', and described it as a 'dangerous, unknown and frightening environment'.

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## STUDENTS' REFLECTIVE PARAGRAPHS

Students were asked to write a reflective paragraph on what they had learnt over the summer school and how useful it has been for writing a personal statement. Instructions were as follows:

*Please write a short paragraph that covers the following points:*

- *What I learnt from the summer school*
- *Has the programme influenced your decision on potential subjects you wish to pursue at university?*
- *How did you manage your independent learning time?*
- *How did you find using Canvas as a Virtual Learning Environment?*
- *How does this prepare you for learning at University?*
- *How did you find the balance between class learning and interactive discussion?*
- *What particular knowledge of skills did you gain from participating in the programme?*
- *What did you enjoy the most from the programme?*
- *What would you have liked to be included?*

Reflections on learning from the summer school included a focus on student perspectives and awareness of contextualisation. Responses included learning 'how to look at sources from different perspectives' and 'how to discuss and understand historical documents and relate it to other pieces of work.' One student commented that they learned 'about the different medias of the past', and another 'how to assess source utility and reliability in conjunction with other sources', demonstrating a broadening of enquiry and further exploration of sources of learning. On a more practical level, one student noted they had learnt 'how to take useful notes'.



Several students reflected that the summer school had help confirm their decision to study a particular subject or combination of subjects. For example, one student commented:

*'This programme has helped me to become certain that I want to pursue the humanities, particularly literature, and I am even more excited to begin my studies.'*

Whilst another added:

*'I already knew I wanted to study History and English Literature combined at university, but the summer school has helped reinforce this for me and put any doubts I had aside.'*

Another commented that the summer school had motivated her to include some additional modules in her HE studies:

*'The programme has confirmed my intentions of pursuing a degree in English Literature but has also made me consider finding a course that includes modules that focus on Art History too.'*

Students also reflected on their management of their independent learning. Several students adopted a strategic approach commented that they had succeeded by:

*'... Ensuring that I completed the work within the given timeframe and to prepare for the sessions before the session began.'*

And:

*'I had to carefully manage my time in order to complete the independent prep work and make detailed notes with my own ideas to discuss and expand on in the collaborative sessions.'*

Another student commented on balancing her independent learning with other commitments:

*'I had to balance my independent learning time with my part-time job, and so on days I was working, I made sure to complete my independent study the night before, or if I wasn't working, I allowed time each morning to study before my afternoon seminar.'*

Students reflected positively on Canvas, commenting that it was 'very easy to use' and 'useful'. One student reported that Canvas allowed them to:

*'... structure my independent learning time, with material presented clearly and options to create myself a timetable.'*

Another commented:

*'it benefitted me to use it as university courses and work in general are moving towards digital management'*

One student, however, 'struggled to navigate it at first and had some technical issues with loading the videos.'

Students reflected positively on the balance between class learning and interactive discussion, reporting that it was 'perfect' and 'executed very well'. One student commented that they had 'enjoyed the balance' and that:

*'it was helpful to have the discussion to share ideas, but it was also nice to listen'.*

Whilst another found:

*'We had the opportunity to learn at our own pace as well as gain the insight of others'.*

Students found the balance between class learning and interactive discussion was 'helpful to improve my engagement with the material'. One student reported, however, that it:

*'...definitely felt that there was a struggle for time as the Zooms would often feel a little rush.'*

In reflecting on their participation in the programme, students reported that they had improved their communication skills, developed 'analytical and academic skills' and their 'ability to interact with other peers'. Another student felt that using interactive story-mapping software had developed their digital skills. Other comments included improvements in presenting and research skills.

A number of students said their favourite part of the programme was 'the interactive aspect of the sessions' as they discussing their thoughts with 'like-minded people' and sharing 'alternative interpretations on a specific topic.' Students liked learning 'from University academics', 'the sessions on the plague and post-apocalyptic World', 'analysing both historic and literary works' and 'learning more about NCH'. Students said that they would have liked 'more class learning', 'more optional resources/link' and 'more focus on careers that are directly linked to humanities subjects' to be included. Students also said that they:

*'would have liked to have more of a discussion about the plague and gone into more detail into this'.*

Students were asked to list three goals they would like to set for themselves to achieve by the end of 2021. A significant number of students said they would like to achieve particular grades, for example, one student said, 'I would like to have achieved an A or A\* grade for my EPQ' and another said, 'achieve an A or A\* in my upcoming English literature mock'. Other goals included 'completing more tasks' and 'practise essay writing'. In reflecting on the skills they wanted to work on by the end of 2021, comments included learning a new language, improving time management skills, and focusing on music exams. Another student reported:

*'I hope I will have read at least three books which are not directly connected to my A-level curriculum'.*

Other goals included finalising degree course decisions, finishing personal statements, submitting university applications and receiving offers from universities. Some students wanted to complete independent study on topics they were interested in, such as '19<sup>th</sup> Century literature' and the Great Plague. A few students were

working on their own novels that they wanted to finish editing or wanted to get published. Finally, one student wanted to 'be more confident working in a group setting and contributing to discussion'.

## CONCLUSION

The findings in this report show participating students responded very positively to the *Culture, Crisis and the City* summer school. It is clear that students found the material, delivery and lecturers very stimulating and that students felt they had developed a number of important skills through taking part in the programme.

Comparisons between pre- and post-survey questions, where applicable, show positive findings, with higher levels of certainty for students planning to apply to university and greater levels of confidence regarding fitting into university, including into NCH. There remained some ambivalence, however, around succeeding at a university interview.

In terms of cohort composition, an analysis of the data shows a weighting towards more advantaged students from IMD quintiles 3-5 and POLAR4 quintiles 3-5; whilst the programme is delivered online, there is no restriction to the London catchment area, where it is harder to find students from low participation neighbourhoods. In addition to this, only 29% of respondents identified as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic, with only 8% of students disclosing their family had been eligible to receive free school meals within the last 5 years.

Future programmes may focus on further outreach and inclusion for students from under-represented groups, which may contribute towards NCH's access targets. It may also be beneficial to increase feedback from students who did not engage in the post-programme survey, as responses here were fewer than those received for the pre-programme survey. For example, it may be possible to gather quick feedback following specific sessions as part of the online delivery. There may also be cause to increase delivery aimed at preparing students for university interviews.